



## HIKING - FOREST SERVICE - ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NATIONAL FOREST – San Juan RANGER DISTRICT - Columbine

Updated: April, 2003

### Pine River Trail to Granite Lake #523

Length: 17 mi / 27.4 km **Recommended Season**

Spring Summer Fall Winter

**Use:** Heavy use in some areas

**Difficulty:** Easy to Strenuous

**USGS Map (s):**

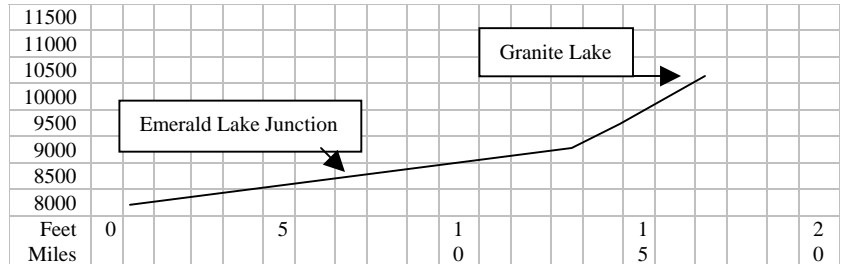
Vallecito Reservoir,  
Granite Peak, Emerald Lake, Granite Lake,

**Starting Elevation:** 8,000'

Trailhead at Pine River Campground

**Ending Elevation:** 10,400'

Granite Lake



#### **Access # 1:**

From Bayfield, head north on County Road (CR) #501, also called the Vallecito Road. Take that road north 22 miles around Vallecito Reservoir. Turn left on the Pine River turnoff – FS #602. Take the road 3.8 miles to the Pine River Campground.

#### **Access # 2:**

From Durango, head north on Florida Road (CR #240) for 14 miles. Continue on CR #240 for 2 miles past the turnoff for Lemon Reservoir. Turn north onto CR #501. Take that road north 12 miles around Vallecito Reservoir. Turn left on the Pine River turnoff – FS #602. Take the road 3.8 miles to the Pine River Campground.

#### **Attractions & Considerations:**

The Pine (or Piños) River Trail begins through a private gate next to Granite Peaks Ranch. Please stay on the trail, and camping is prohibited. Aspens, ponderosa pines, and conifers are in abundance along the trail as you follow the trail north.

The Weminuche Wilderness boundary is 2.7 miles up the trail. Lake Fork Trail turns off to the north at mile 6.3. The Pine River Trail continues to ascend, sometimes gradually, sometimes moderately, and occasionally steeply to the northeast. At 9,900' at mile 15.5, turn east and ford the Pine River on Trail #539 toward Divide Lakes. Follow this trail 1/10 mile to the turnoff for the Granite Lake Trail. This trail climbs steeply for 1 mile to the lake. It is not recommended for stock. Due to the location of Granite Lake between steep slopes, camping at the lake is impossible.

The alpine meadows are full of blooming wildflowers in late July and in August. There are excellent views and photographic possibilities. Water can be found off the trail in most of the tributaries, but due to Giardia it should be filtered. As with all high-altitude areas, storms can move in rapidly, bringing severe wind, lightning, rain, snow, or hail—any time of year. Plan accordingly.

#### **Fishing Considerations:**

The Pine River is not accessible for the first 2.5 miles of trail, but from the Wilderness boundary to the Continental Divide, the river offers some of the finest fly-fishing found anywhere. The trout in the Wilderness are wild fish. They include rainbows, brookies, browns, and cutthroats. Please check Colorado DOW fishing brochures regarding limits, allowable lures, and restrictions on certain lakes, rivers, etc.

#### **Weminuche Wilderness Regulations:**

- Group size is limited to 15 people.
- Combination of people and stock = 25.
- Dogs must be under control.
- No unattended campfires.
- Camping is not allowed within 100 feet of any water source.
- Outfitter-guides who receive any form of compensation must obtain a special-use permit to operate on public land.
- Possession of motorized equipment and mechanized means of transport are not permitted.
- Please check trailhead signs or Forest Service Offices for site-specific camping, campfire, and livestock regulations.



#### **Scan of the San Juan National Forest Map**

Forest Service maps and other publications are available at the Public Lands Center, in the Durango Tech Center, ½ mile west of Durango off Highway 160; or by calling (970) 247-4874.  
[www.sjma.org](http://www.sjma.org)